HIGH-UP ADS

FREE WORKBOOK

ADS WRITTEN IN YOUR CUSTOMERS' WORDS, AND THE PLAN THAT PICKS THE WINNER

> Eight steps to fill in, starting with what you can afford to pay for a result.



14 CHAPTERS

39 CHECKBOXES

4 BLOCKS TO COPY

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What's the question you could answer in your sleep? The one you hear on the phone over and over, sometimes with a sigh. "Does the foam sag after a year?" "What's it going to cost me, all in?" "Is the road paved all the way up?"

You've probably been treating that question as a chore. It's the headline of your next ad. For every person who calls to ask it, there are others wondering the exact same thing who haven't picked up the phone yet. When they see it written out, they stop scrolling.

A bad ad rarely has a design problem. Usually it says what the business wants to say, in the business's words. The person scrolling on their phone doesn't see themselves in it and keeps going. The right words already exist. Your customers said them in texts, in reviews, and on the phone.

This workbook takes you from that question to a tested ad.

01 WHAT YOU'LL LEARN AND WHAT TO DO AFTER READING

The workbook has eight steps. At each one you fill in a table, with a pen or in a spreadsheet. When you're done, you'll have:

- Your target cost. What you can pay for an order, an appointment, a booking, or a quote request, worked out from your gross margin.
- Three angles. Three reasons people buy from you, in your customers' words, each with its proof.
- At least six openings, two per angle. The opening is what someone sees and hears in the first three seconds of a video, or the first line of a text ad.
- An offer that answers everything a buyer needs: what they get, what it costs in total, what happens if they don't like it, why buy now, and what to do next.
- A test plan, with a budget for each ad and the date you'll decide.
- A weekly routine, so you're never out of ads when the old ones wear out.

STEP	WHAT YOU DO	HOW LONG IT TAKES
1	Work out what you can pay for a result	20 minutes, with your gross margin handy
2	Collect your customers' words and write three angles	An hour, plus three phone calls
3	Write the openings	30 minutes
4	Pick the formats and list what footage you're missing	20 minutes
5	Write the offer	20 minutes
6	Gather your proof	30 minutes
7	Build the test plan and launch it	30 minutes, plus one to two weeks of running
8	Start the weekly routine	An hour a day, five days

What you need before you start

- [ ] Access to your ad account, or to the person who runs it for you
- [ ] Your customer messages from the last month
- [ ] Your reviews
- [ ] A rough number for your gross margin
- [ ] A phone you can shoot video with

Three rules the whole workbook rests on

1. The words come from customers. What you write at your desk sounds like a company. What a customer writes sounds like a person who has the problem.
2. Test the big idea first, then the details. A wrong angle won't be saved by a different button color.
3. Decide by what a result costs you, compared with your target cost. Not by likes, comments, or benchmarks you read online. Say an order costs you $180 in ads. For an online store selling sofa beds, that's a win, because there's money left after it. For a store selling phone cases, the same order is a disaster.

After Step 8 you'll find four examples worked from start to finish, for made-up businesses: an online store selling sofa beds, an auto repair shop in Boise, a 6-room inn in the Catskills, and a company that builds steel buildings for other businesses. Their numbers are hypothetical. If you get stuck on a step, open the example closest to your business.

02 STEP 1. WHAT YOU CAN PAY FOR A RESULT

Three people ordered a sofa bed after an ad that spent $540. That's $180 per order. Is that good or bad?

For the sofa bed store in our example, it's exactly what the owner can afford. And the owner only knows that because they did the math beforehand. For a store selling phone cases, the same $180 order would be a disaster. With sofa beds, there's still money left over.

That's why, before your first ad, you work out what you can pay for a result. The result is what you want the ad to get you: an order, an appointment, a booking, or a quote request.

Without that number, you can't judge a single ad.

Two numbers: break-even and target cost

- Break-even is the most you can pay for a result (order, appointment, booking, request) without losing money. Above it, you lose money on every sale.
- Target cost (marketers call it target CPA, cost per acquisition) is what you can pay for a result and still keep the profit you want.

You work them out once and keep them next to your results table. Use amounts before sales tax. If your ad platform adds sales tax to your bill, use the total you're actually charged when you compare. (Washington State, for example, has charged retail sales tax on advertising services since October 1, 2025.)

Step by step

1. Find what's left on one sale. Multiply your average sale by your gross margin. Then subtract the per-sale costs you pay yourself, if they aren't already in the margin.
2. Find how many out of 10 actually buy. Out of 10 appointments, how many show up. Out of 10 bookings, how many don't cancel. Out of 10 quote requests, how many become a contract. For an online store, count how many orders out of 10 you get to keep after cancellations, returns, and chargebacks.
3. Work out break-even: what's left on a sale × how many out of 10 buy ÷ 10.
4. Decide the profit you want to keep from each sale. If you don't know yet, start with half of what's left on a sale. Your target cost then comes out at half of break-even.
5. Work out your target cost: (what's left on a sale − your profit) × how many out of 10 buy ÷ 10.
6. Work out the test budget for one ad: target cost × 2 to 3. You'll use it in Step 7.

A calculation with made-up numbers, for an auto repair shop in Boise. Each visit leaves $180, and the owner wants to keep $50 of it. Out of 10 people who book, 8 show up.

- Break-even: 180 × 8 ÷ 10 = $144 per appointment.
- Target cost: (180 − 50) × 8 ÷ 10 = $104 per appointment.

Where to find the numbers for your type of business:

TYPE OF BUSINESS	THE RESULT	PER-SALE COSTS	HOW MANY OUT OF 10 BUY	WHERE TO FIND IT
Online store	the order	shipping, packaging, payment fees	how many orders you keep after cancellations, returns, and chargebacks	your store's reports, your carrier invoices
Appointment-based services	the appointment	usually already in the margin	how many show up out of those booked	your booking calendar, your point-of-sale reports
Bookings	the booking	cleaning, breakfast, supplies	how many bookings don't cancel	your reservation system
Businesses that sell to other businesses	the quote request	usually already in the margin	how many requests become a contract	the quotes you sent and the contracts you signed last year

If customers come back (to the shop, the clinic, the inn), you can work out break-even on a year of business from one customer instead of the first visit. That lets you pay more for a new customer, but only do it when you have the real repeat rate from your own records. Until then, calculate on the first sale and don't fool yourself.

Your worksheet

Table 1. What you can pay for a result.

WHAT YOU CALCULATE	YOUR NUMBER	HOW YOU GOT IT
Average sale, before sales tax		
Gross margin, in %		
Per-sale costs you pay yourself		
What's left on a sale (sale × margin − costs)		
How many out of 10 buy (your show rate or close rate: 8 out of 10 = 80%; for a store, how many orders out of 10 you keep)		
Break-even per result (what's left × how many out of 10 ÷ 10)		
Profit you want to keep from each sale		
Target cost per result ((what's left − profit) × how many out of 10 ÷ 10)		
Test budget for one ad (target cost × 2 to 3)		

You'll use the last row in Step 7. If six times your test budget is more than you can spend in a month, you still run the test, just smaller, following "If the budget isn't enough" in Step 7.

03 STEP 2. THE ANGLE: WHAT CUSTOMERS SAY, WHAT STOPS THEM, WHAT YOU CAN PROVE

A customer texts you: "does the foam sag after a year?" You answer, close the thread, and move on. You just lost the best line you could have put in an ad.

That's where the angle is. The angle is the reason someone would buy from you, in their own words. You find it in what customers write and ask. If you go looking for it at your desk, you end up with the company's words again.

Say the sofa bed store reads through its messages and sees this question come up a lot. That gives you an angle: the person who got burned by a cheap sofa. And the proof? A sofa bed sawed in half on camera, so you can see the foam.

Where to find your customers' words

- In reviews, yours and your competitors', on Google, Yelp, Amazon, or Facebook. The most useful are the three-star ones: the person tells you what they liked and what bugged them.
- In messages: texts, emails, and the questions you got on the phone in the last month.
- In local Facebook groups, Nextdoor, and Reddit threads where your customers ask for recommendations, in the comments.
- From three customers, on the phone. The steps are below.

Write every line in Table 2 exactly the way the person said it, typos and all.

Three phone calls that beat a day at your desk

1. Pick three customers who bought in the last two months. Ideally they're different: one who bought fast, one who thought about it for a long time, one who came through a referral.
2. Text them:

COPY THIS

> Hi [first name], it's [your name] from [business]. You got [what they bought] from us in [month]. We're trying to make better ads, and the most helpful thing is hearing how you decided. Do you have 10 minutes for a quick call this week? Five questions, that's it.

3. On the call, ask the five questions below. Write the answers down word for word, not summaries. Don't suggest an answer. Don't defend your business if they say something unpleasant, because that's exactly where the angle is.

The questions:

1. What happened that made you start looking for [the product or service]?
2. What else did you try, or who else did you look at before us?
3. Why did you end up choosing us?
4. What worried you before you ordered or came in?
5. If you told a friend about us, what would you say?

What you get from the answers:

- the first question gives you the scene for your opening;
- the second shows who they compare you with;
- the third gives you the angle;
- the fourth gives you the objection;

- the fifth is often the ad copy itself.

Table 2. Your customers' words.

THE EXACT LINE	WHERE YOU GOT IT	HOW MANY TIMES YOU'VE HEARD IT

Competitors' ads: the free ad libraries

You look at your competitors' ads to see which angles they've already taken, so you don't repeat them. All three libraries below are free.

Meta Ad Library (facebook.com/ads/library), for Facebook and Instagram:

1. Pick the country: United States.
2. Under ad category, choose "All ads."
3. Type a competitor's name or a word from your industry into the search.
4. Look at the active ads. Each one shows the date it started running.
5. Write down each ad's angle in Table 3.

Two signs an ad is bringing the competitor customers: they've kept it running for months, or they're running it in lots of versions. That's where their money is going.

Google Ads Transparency Center (adstransparency.google.com): search by the advertiser's name or website. Then filter by the region where the ads ran and by date.

TikTok Creative Center: open the Top Ads section. Filter by region, campaign objective, time period, and ad language. You can sort by CTR, which is how many impressions out of 100 end in a click.

Table 3. Competitors' ads.

COMPETITOR	WHAT THE AD PROMISES, IN ONE SENTENCE	TYPE OF OPENING	RUNNING SINCE	WHAT NOBODY SAYS

The last column is the valuable one. If everyone talks about price and nobody talks about delivery, timing, or the warranty, you've found an open angle.

What stops people: the objections

An objection is the reason someone isn't buying yet. The most common ones are price, "I'm not sure it'll work for me," timing, and "I tried something like it and it didn't work." You get them from the answers to the fourth question and from your messages.

Table 4. The objections.

THE OBJECTION, IN THE CUSTOMER'S WORDS	HOW YOU ANSWER IT	WHAT YOU CAN SHOW AS PROOF

What the person already knows decides what you say first

The same angle gets said differently depending on how close the person is to buying. The rule is simple: start where they are, not where you are.

Copywriter Eugene Schwartz split buyers into five levels, by how much they already know, in his 1966 book *Breakthrough Advertising*, and people still use his levels today. They answer the question "how much does this person know about their problem and about you?"

LEVEL	WHAT THEY KNOW	HOW YOU RECOGNIZE THEM	WHAT THE AD OPENS WITH
1	doesn't know they have a problem	isn't searching or asking anything	the scene where the problem shows up
2	knows the problem, doesn't know there's a fix	asks "is it normal that...?"	the problem, in their words
3	knows the fix, doesn't know you	searches Google for "auto repair near me"	why you and not someone else
4	knows you, isn't sure you're right for them	has seen your site, asked you something	the proof and the answer to the objection
5	has decided, just wants the terms	added to cart, asked for a quote	the price, the timing, the warranty, and the button

What that means on each platform:

- On Google Search you're usually talking to people at level 3, because they're already searching.
- On Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok you mostly run into people at levels 1 and 2.
- Ads aimed at people who've visited your site are for levels 4 and 5.

An ad that opens with the price gets lost on someone who doesn't know they have the problem. One that explains the problem from scratch bores the person who's already put the product in their cart.

Putting the angles together

An angle has four parts: who it's for, what situation they're in, what they get from you, and how you prove it. In the last column, write the person's level, from 1 to 5.

Table 5. Your angles.

WHO IT'S FOR	THEIR SITUATION, IN THEIR WORDS	WHAT THEY GET FROM YOU	HOW YOU PROVE IT	THEIR LEVEL, 1 TO 5

If "How you prove it" is empty, the angle isn't ready. Come back to it after Step 6, where you gather your proof.

04 STEP 3. THE OPENING: THE FIRST THREE SECONDS OR THE FIRST LINE

Someone's scrolling on the train with the sound off. They hit your video and give it three seconds.

On a phone, people decide in the first few seconds whether to keep watching. That's why the opening matters more than any other part of the ad. Three numbers to keep in mind:

- TikTok recommends getting your message across in the first 3 seconds and putting your hook in the first 6.
- For text on screen, TikTok recommends showing 5 to 10 words per second.
- On Google Search, the opening is the ad headline, 30 characters at most.

Picture an auto repair shop that opens its video on a dashboard, first thing in the morning, with the check engine light on. On screen: "Check engine light came on this morning?" Anyone that happened to today stops.

Six types of opening

They work for almost any product.

TYPE	WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE	WHEN TO USE IT
The question they're already asking	"Guests coming Friday and nowhere to put them?"	when the problem is clear and common
The objection, said by you	"Looks expensive until you see what's included."	when price is the main reason people say no
The demo	the first shot shows the product doing what you promise	when the product looks good on video
The real number	the price, the turnaround, the warranty	when your number beats what people expect
The scene	the exact moment the problem shows up	for services, emergencies, everyday things
The comparison with what they do now	"If you're still calling to book..."	when their current way is a hassle

Step by step

1. Write two openings for each angle in Table 5, of two different types. Each has one idea and reads in three seconds. Put them in Table 6. If you get stuck, there are ten examples for each type of business at the end of this step.
2. Run each opening through the checklist under the table.
3. Write the rest of the video using the 20-second outline (Table 7).
4. If you run Google Search ads, also write the 15 headlines for the ad.

Table 6. Your openings. You'll need them for the first test round.

ANGLE	TYPE	THE OPENING (ONE IDEA, READABLE IN 3 SECONDS)	WHAT THE FIRST SHOT SHOWS
1			
1			
2			
2			
3			
3			

Check the opening before you shoot it. Tick what's true. If two boxes stay empty, rewrite it.

- [ ] It makes sense with the sound off. Lots of people scroll muted, so put the opening on screen as text too.
- [ ] Someone who's never heard of you gets it.
- [ ] It has a word a customer actually said, from Table 2.

- [ ] The first shot shows what the text says, not your logo.
- [ ] A competitor couldn't use it without changing it.

The rest of the video: Google's four rules

The opening holds someone for three seconds, but what comes next decides whether they click. Google boiled down what effective video ads have in common into four rules and calls them the ABCDs:

- A, attention: get into the story fast, with tight shots. The text and the audio say the same thing.
- B, branding: the product or your business name shows up early and comes back.
- C, connection: show people using the product and stick to one message.
- D, direction: say clearly what the person should do, on screen and out loud.

Google cites a 2021 study with Kantar: according to Google, ads built this way showed up to a 30% lift in short-term sales likelihood.

Table 7. Outline of a 20-second video. Fill it in for each opening in Table 6.

SECONDS	WHAT YOU SEE	WHAT YOU HEAR OR READ ON SCREEN	YOUR VERSION
0 to 3	the problem, the product in action, or a person talking	the opening, written and spoken	
3 to 10	the demo: the product does what you promise	one sentence on what the person gets	
10 to 16	the proof: a real review, your process, a number from your business	the proof, with its source	
16 to 20	the offer and the next step	the price or deadline and the button, said and written	

Shoot it on your phone, vertical, in daylight. A clean phone video that shows the real product beats a studio animation that shows nothing of your business.

On Google Search: the 15 headlines

A search ad takes up to 15 headlines of 30 characters each. Google mixes them on its own, so if you write 15 versions of the same idea, every combination comes out the same. Split them like this:

HOW MANY	WHAT THEY SAY	EXAMPLE (AUTO REPAIR, MADE-UP PRICE)	CHARACTERS
4	what the person searches, in their words, with the place	Auto repair in Boise	20
3	the price or the offer	Oil change and filter: $89	26
3	the proof or what sets you apart	Photos of every part we swap	28
2	the objection handled, or the convenience	Drop it at 8, pick up at 5	26
2	the next step	Book your service online	24
1	your business name	[Shop name] Auto Repair	

Count the characters before you upload, because a 31-character headline won't fit. Don't pin headlines to positions unless one message has to show every time: Google doesn't recommend pinning, because it leaves fewer combinations to try.

Ten openings for each type of business

These are here so you can hear what a good opening sounds like. Use the numbers in square brackets only if they're true for you, and anything that isn't true for you stays out of the ad, however good it sounds.

Online store (example: sofa beds)

1. Guests coming Friday and nowhere to put them?
2. Here's how this sofa turns into a bed without moving the coffee table.
3. It's [x] inches wide, so it fits in a studio apartment.
4. What it costs with delivery, carried upstairs: $[price].
5. You keep asking if the foam sags. We cut a sofa in half so you can see.
6. The sofa in this video was filmed today in our warehouse, not lifted from a catalog.
7. A sofa by day, a bed at night, and storage for the comforter underneath.
8. The cover comes off and goes in the washer. We tested it with ketchup.
9. Don't love it? You have [x] days to send it back.
10. In a studio, this sofa does the job of a bed and a closet.

Appointment-based services (example: auto repair shop in Boise)

1. Check engine light came on this morning?
2. An oil change is $[price] with the filter. You know the price before we start.
3. Drop it off at 8, pick it up at 5, and get photos of everything we replaced.
4. Before you replace your rotors because someone told you to, let us measure them.
5. We hand you back your old parts, in a box.

6. What every noise you hear when you brake actually means.
7. Road trip coming up? We still have openings Thursday and Friday.
8. A noise in the wheel can be a cheap fix or an expensive one. You'll know which before you pay a cent.
9. Book your appointment from your phone, no call needed.
10. Switch to winter tires without the wait: pick your time from home.

Appointment-based services, second example: a dental office

1. What it means when a tooth only hurts with cold.
2. Your first visit is $[price], with X-rays and a written treatment plan.
3. You'll know what the treatment costs before you sit in the chair.
4. The dentist explains every step before doing it.
5. We're open Saturdays too, for people who work during the week.
6. What happens, step by step, at a cleaning.
7. What an implant costs, piece by piece: the implant, the crown, the follow-ups.
8. Your kid's first visit is just to meet us.
9. Pay for treatment in [x] monthly installments, no interest.
10. The dentist in this video is the one who'll treat you.

Bookings (example: a 6-room inn in the Catskills)

1. Weekend rooms usually go by [day].
2. The room in this video was filmed this morning, not taken from a brochure.
3. For a birthday, book the whole inn: [x] rooms and the dining room.
4. We bake the breakfast bread every morning in the oven out back.
5. The road is paved all the way to the door. Here it is, filmed from the car.
6. Book from your phone and see which rooms are open right away.
7. What you see from the porch at 7 am in October.
8. Coming with little kids? We have high chairs and a play corner you can see from the table.
9. A night for two with breakfast is $[price] plus tax.
10. We still have one room open this weekend.

Businesses that sell to other businesses (example: steel buildings for manufacturing and storage)

1. How long does a [x]-square-foot building take, from design to move-in?
2. You get the quote in [x] business days, priced by phase.
3. What the building inspector checks before you get your certificate of occupancy, and how to get ready.
4. The completion date goes in the contract, and we pay a penalty if we're late.

5. Putting up a steel building, from the first beam to the roof, in one minute.
6. Design-build: one company, one contract, from drawings to final inspection.
7. What does a month's delay on your production building cost you?
8. How we build next to a production line that never stops.
9. The engineer who stamps the drawings comes to the first meeting.
10. A price per square foot means nothing until you've answered [x] questions.

05 STEP 4. THE FORMAT, ON EACH PLATFORM

You sell sofa beds online, and you filmed the sofa beautifully, wide, like a catalog shot. Then you tried to crop it for Reels, and what was left on the screen? Either the armrest or the middle cushion.

So you wonder: do I have to shoot this three times, for Reels, for the feed, and for Google?

No. You shoot it once, vertical, and crop everything else from it.

Your customers' words make the ad. The format just carries them to the person. So don't spend more effort on the format than you need to.

Make the footage in 9:16 first, which is the full screen of a phone held upright. Everything that matters sits in the middle of the screen. From it, you crop 4:5, which is a little taller than it is wide, and 1:1, which is square.

It doesn't work the other way around. You can't get a tall image or video out of a wide one without losing the product. Shoot the wide formats (16:9 and 1.91:1) separately, with the phone on its side, and only if you need them.

The sofa bed store in our example shoots its video vertical, for Reels and Stories (the vertical videos on Instagram and Facebook). From the same video it crops a 4:5 version for the Facebook feed and a 1:1 version for Google's image and video ads. It shoots the wide version separately.

And yes, still on a phone and in daylight, as in Step 3.

Which platform to start on

If you have the money and time for only one, pick it by how your customer looks for a fix.

YOUR SITUATION	START ON	WHY
People already search Google for what you sell ("auto repair [city]", "steel building price")	Google Search	You catch people while they're searching; the words matter more than the image
Your product looks good on video and people don't look for it until they see it	Meta (Facebook and Instagram) or TikTok	You make them want it; the image does all the work
Your product is best explained by a person talking to the camera, and you can film every week	TikTok	It needs fresh footage often, shot naturally on a phone
You sell to other businesses	Google Search for people already searching for what you sell, then LinkedIn	On LinkedIn you pick people by job title and company, when you know who decides
Customers come to you in person (repair shop, clinic, driving school)	Google Search and Meta, within a radius around you	People show up in person, so only those nearby matter

Text placement on Reels and Stories

Did you put the price in big letters at the bottom of the video? On Reels, that's exactly where the caption and buttons go. They'll cover it.

On Reels and Stories, keep text and logos out of the top 14% of the screen, the bottom 35%, and 6% on each side. What's left in the middle is the safe zone.

Two text lengths are worth remembering:

- on Reels, the primary text shows 44 characters;
- on Google Search, an ad takes up to 15 headlines of 30 characters and 4 descriptions of 90.

The rest of the numbers are in the appendix at the end. Platforms change them often, so check them in your ad account before you upload.

Step by step

1. Pick your starting platform from the table above.
2. Write the formats you need there in Table 8.
3. Note what footage you already have and what still needs to be shot or made.
4. Shoot the vertical version first, then crop 4:5 and 1:1 from it. Shoot the wide version separately, if you need it.

Your worksheet

Write the platform you picked, the formats you need, and the footage you're missing.

Table 8. What you have and what you're missing.

PLATFORM	FORMAT YOU NEED	FOOTAGE YOU ALREADY HAVE	WHAT STILL NEEDS TO BE SHOT OR MADE

06 STEP 5. THE OFFER

Someone saw your ad, liked it, and texts you: "so what's the total with shipping?" If they had to ask, the offer wasn't ready.

A good opening brings someone to the offer. If the offer is vague, that's where they stop. In the ad, or in the first screen of the page, a person has to find five things:

- what they get;
- what it costs in total;
- what happens if they don't like it;
- why buy now (only if the reason is true);
- what to do next.

"Professional car service" is a vague offer. "Oil change and filter, $89, drop it off in the morning and pick it up that evening" is just the start of a clear one. That sentence tells people what they get and what it costs. The full offer has all five parts, like in the table that follows.

What a vague offer and a clear one look like

Examples for typical businesses, with made-up numbers and prices the way the customer sees them:

BUSINESS	VAGUE	CLEAR
Sofa bed store	Quality sofas at great prices	An 80-inch sofa bed; $1,290 with white-glove delivery (carried upstairs), plus sales tax where it applies; if you don't love it, you have 30 days to send it back; order on the website
Auto repair shop	Professional car service	Oil change and filter: drop it at 8, pick it up at 5, with photos and your old parts; $89, nothing extra without your OK; if the problem comes back within [x] days, we redo the work free; book from your phone
Inn	Your dream mountain getaway	A night for two with breakfast; $190 plus tax; free cancellation up to 7 days before; "we still have one room open this weekend" (only if it's true); book from your phone and see which rooms are open right away
Steel buildings	Complete construction solutions	Design-build: one company, one contract, from drawings to final inspection; the quote in 5 business days, with the total price by phase; the completion date written into the contract, with penalties on us if we're late; request a quote through the form on the website

For the sofa beds, the repair shop, and the steel buildings, only "why now" is missing: the other four parts are there. These businesses don't have a real reason, and an empty line beats a made-up one.

Step by step

1. Write each part of the offer the way it is today, in Table 9.
2. Rewrite it more clearly, with numbers and what's actually included.
3. Check the two rules that keep your ads from getting rejected:
   - a deadline or "limited stock" only goes in if it's true;
   - the price goes in whole, with shipping and fees. Google Ads policy bans hiding the total cost or giving a false impression of the price. TikTok rejects ads where the price or discount doesn't match the landing page. And if you sell short-term lodging or live-event tickets in the US, the FTC's fees rule (in effect since May 12, 2025) requires you to show the total price, with every mandatory fee you know about, more prominently than other pricing. Taxes can be left out of that number, but you have to show them before the customer pays.
4. Do the final check, under the table.

Table 9. Your offer.

THE PART	HOW IT IS NOW	HOW YOU MAKE IT CLEARER
What they get, specifically (quantity, timing, what's included)		
The total price and what it includes		
What happens if they don't like it (returns, warranty)		
Why now (stock, season, deadline, only if real)		
What they do next: one button		

Checking the offer. The person reads the ad and the first screen of the page. Tick what they can find there:

- [ ] what they get;
- [ ] what they pay, in total;
- [ ] what happens if they don't like it;
- [ ] why buy now, if you have a true reason;
- [ ] what to do next.

If the answer to any point is "they'd have to ask," the offer isn't ready. Only tick "why now" if the reason is true; otherwise leave it blank.

07 STEP 6. PROOF, WITHOUT CLAIMS YOU CAN'T BACK UP

A customer comes to a repair shop for the first time. What can they actually check there? They can't check whether you're "the best in town." They can check whether they booked from their phone and got the car back the same day.

That's good proof: something people can check for themselves. "Best in town" convinces nobody, because anyone can write it and nobody can prove it.

Picture the repair shop in our example with "The best auto shop in town" on its ad. Then the owner changes it to "Same-day service, booked from your phone." Now people have something to check on their first visit.

Step by step

1. Write every claim from your ads in Table 10: from your angles, openings, and offer.
2. Next to each one, put a piece of proof from the five types below.
3. Rewrite the claims without proof, like in the second table below, or cut them.
4. Get permission for every review you use.
5. Run your copy through the platform rules at the end of this step.

Five types of proof

PROOF	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	WHAT YOU NEED
The demo	the product on camera doing what you promise, with no editing that hides anything	the product and a phone
A number from your business	years in business, orders shipped, customers served	the real number, from your invoices or your platform
A real review	a screenshot from Google, with the person's name	the review and their permission
Your process	how you work, step by step, with your own people	your people, on camera
A written guarantee	what you do if it doesn't work	a guarantee you actually honor

How to rewrite claims that fail

FAILS	PASSES
The best auto shop in town	Same-day service, booked from your phone
Guaranteed results	If you don't like it, we refund you within [x] days (only if it's true)
Thousands of happy customers	The real number of orders, from your invoices
Lose 10 pounds in two weeks	A promise like this doesn't go in at all

How to ask for a review

Ask by text or email, after the sale or the visit, and ask every customer, not just the happy ones. Google's rules for Maps reviews ban picking who you ask and ban discounts or gifts in exchange for a review. The FTC says that asking only the customers you expect to be happy is misleading if it skews your reviews. Get your review link from your Google Business Profile.

COPY THIS

Hi [first name], it's [your name] from [business]. If you have a minute, it would really help us to hear on Google how [what they bought] went, good or not so good: [your Google review link]. Thank you!

How to ask permission to use a review

Before you put someone's review in an ad, ask them with this message:

COPY THIS

Hi [first name], thanks for the review you left us on Google about [what they bought]. We'd like to use it in an ad, with your name as it shows on Google and a screenshot from there, with no changes. Is that OK with you? If you'd rather it stay on Google, we'll leave it there.

Keep their answer in the same folder as the ad files; a screenshot is enough. If someone asks a year from now, you have proof they said yes.

If you don't have reviews

Don't buy them and don't write them yourself. Since October 21, 2024, the FTC's rule on consumer reviews bans fake reviews and buying reviews that have to say something positive. Use the demo and your process instead: the sofa sawed in half, the mechanic holding the worn part next to the new one, the room filmed in the morning with no filter. For a new business, proof people can see with their own eyes convinces more than a review they can't check.

Your worksheet

Table 10. Your proof.

WHAT YOU CLAIM IN THE AD	THE PROOF	CAN THE CUSTOMER CHECK IT?

What you're not allowed to promise

The rules below are the platforms'. A rejected ad costs you a day, but a shut-down account costs you months, so read them before you write your copy.

Weight loss, supplements, cosmetic procedures

- On Meta, set the audience to 18 and older only.
- Meta doesn't accept copy that makes people feel bad about how they look, or close-ups of pinched body fat.
- Meta doesn't accept promises of a result within a set time without qualifiers or caveats, like the made-up line "lose 10 pounds in two weeks." You can say, though, how long it usually takes to see results.
- On Meta, before-and-after images are allowed for cosmetic procedures, with the audience set to 18 and older. Check Meta's current health and wellness page for limits on specific treatments, because they change.
- TikTok bans before-and-after comparisons and exaggerated effects.

Illnesses and treatments

- Meta bans claims that you cure incurable diseases, like diabetes, cancer, or Alzheimer's, even when a doctor makes them.
- Google bans supplements presented as being as effective as prescription drugs.
- Google also bans unapproved products presented as treatments.

- In the US, the FTC expects health claims in ads to be backed by competent and reliable scientific evidence.

Loans, credit cards, insurance

- On Meta, set the audience to 18 and older only.
- Don't ask for personal or financial information directly in the ad.
- Where a license is required, show it.
- Meta bans loans of 90 days or less, binary options, and contracts for difference (CFDs).

Reviews and testimonials

- Use only real reviews, with the person's permission.
- For reviews on Google Maps, Google bans discounts or gifts in exchange for them and bans asking only happy customers.
- The FTC's rule bans fake reviews and reviews bought on the condition that they're positive. Your managers can't post reviews without saying who they are, and if you ask employees or family for reviews, tell them to say they work for you or are related.
- TikTok bans false endorsements and using a public figure's image without permission.

Prices and offers

- Google bans offers that don't exist and hiding the total cost.
- TikTok bans mismatched information about price and discount.

If you sell anything in the first three categories, read the platform's full page before your first ad. The links are under Sources, and the rules change often.

There's one more rule plenty of people break without knowing it. On Meta, your copy can't say or imply that you know something personal about the person: their health, age, religion, or financial situation. "Are you bankrupt?" or "Do you have diabetes?" get rejected. "Bankruptcy help" or "A new treatment for diabetes" get through.

08 STEP 7. THE TEST PLAN

Have you ever turned off an ad after two days because "it isn't working"?

Test the big ideas first, then the details. In one round, you compare one kind of thing, for example the angles. The format and the offer stay the same, because otherwise you won't know what worked. You decide by cost per result, which you compare with the target cost from Table 1.

Say the target cost at the repair shop from Step 1 is $104 per appointment. Each ad gets two to three times the target cost to test: 104 × 2 = $208 and 104 × 3 = $312, so about $210 to $310. With six ads, the first round costs about $1,250 to $1,870.

The three rounds

1. Round 1, the angles. Three angles from Table 5, two openings each. Six ads, same format, same offer.
2. Round 2, the openings. Four new openings on the winning angle.
3. Round 3, the format and the offer. Video against an image, or one offer against another.

The rounds are for image and video ads. On Google Search, Google mixes the headlines itself, so you put your angles in the headlines, as in Step 3.

Judge an ad only after it has spent about what two or three results cost you at your target cost, not on day one. Compare each ad with the others in the same account, not with benchmarks you read online.

How much budget to put in

The math. Budget per ad = target cost from Table 1 × 2 to 3. Round budget = budget per ad × number of ads.

Daily budget = test budget per ad ÷ number of days until the decision. For example, $540 over 7 days comes to about $77 a day, for each version in the test.

Decision date = start date plus the days you chose. Take at least 7 days, so you catch a weekend.

If the budget isn't enough

- Round 1 costs more than you can spend in a month. Test three ads, one opening per angle. Test the second opening in round 2.
- You can't afford even three ads. Judge by an earlier step: an add to cart, a text message, an availability request. Target cost for that step = target cost per result × how many out of 10 who take that step end up with the result (order, appointment, booking, request) ÷ 10. Example C shows the math.
- You get fewer than ten results a month across the whole account, and you sell to consumers, not businesses. Stop testing openings. Test only angles: each month, run the angle that's working next to a new one.
- You sell to other businesses and requests come in slowly. Read Example D: your test runs for months, not weeks.

The earlier step is cheaper to measure, but less reliable, because not everyone who adds to cart buys. Once you have enough orders, go back to cost per order.

On Meta: how to set up the test in your account

Say you put three ads in the same place. Three days later, one had taken almost all the money. Not because it was the best, but because Facebook picked it in the first few days. The other two never got a chance to show what they could do.

To keep that from happening, here's how the account is built. You create and track ads in Ads Manager, the part of your Meta account made for that. There you have a campaign. Inside the campaign you have one or more ad sets. The ad set is the group that holds ads with the same audience and the same budget. The budget goes on the ad set or on the campaign, not on each ad.

Which objective to pick

How does Facebook know the person from your ad actually bought? From the pixel. The pixel is code on your website that tells Meta when someone buys or submits a form. Without it, the account never learns when a result happens, and you can't compare ads by what a result costs.

Pick the campaign objective by what you count as a result:

TYPE OF BUSINESS	WHAT YOU COUNT AS A RESULT	OBJECTIVE ON META	HOW THE ACCOUNT FINDS OUT
Online store	the order	Sales	the pixel tells the account an order was paid
Appointment-based services	the appointment	Leads	through the booking form on your website; if people call or text, the account doesn't find out and you count them yourself, with the codes from "When the result doesn't show up in your ad account," below
Bookings	the booking or the availability request	Sales if guests pay on the website, Leads if they book by message	through a booking system connected to the pixel; if they book by message, you count them yourself, with the codes
Businesses that sell to other businesses	the quote request	Leads	through the form, plus the log where you mark qualified requests

Running an online store with too few orders so far? The Sales objective can also optimize for an earlier step, like add to cart.

The trial run

Place a test order, book a test appointment, or send a test request yourself and check that it shows up in the account. If it doesn't, and you can't count it yourself with the codes from "When the result doesn't show up in your ad account," don't start the test. You'd be spending money on ads you can't judge.

The test, step by step

Use one tool: creative testing. When you create or edit an ad, below the creative section you'll find "Creative testing," with a "Set up test" button.

1. Create the campaign with the objective from the table and a single ad set, with the audience you picked. The ad set is only for the test, with no other ads in it. For the bid strategy, which is how you tell Meta what to pay, leave it on "Highest volume." The test doesn't work with a cost per result goal, a bid cap, or a ROAS goal.
2. Create the first ad, with the format and offer for this round.
3. On its page, under "Creative testing," click "Set up test."
4. Choose how many ads go into the test: between 2 and 5 (some accounts show a higher limit). Meta makes copies of your ad. The ad you started from isn't part of the test.
5. Set the test budget: the budget per ad from above, times the number of ads. Set the length to the days until your decision date. For the metric you compare the ads on, pick cost per result.
6. Edit each copy. In round 1, change the angle or the opening. The audience, format, and offer stay the same.
7. Publish. Then don't touch it until the decision date.

What does the tool do? Meta tries to spend about the same on each ad in the test. A person sees only one ad from the test, so the ads don't get in each other's way. You'll find the results under "Experiments" in Ads Manager. After the test, the ads keep running, but Meta stops splitting the spend evenly.

Round 1 has six ads. If the tool in your account takes five at most, run round 1 with three ads, one opening per angle, like in "If the budget isn't enough." Test the second opening for each angle in round 2.

Did you also see "A/B test" in Ads Manager? That's a different tool: it compares whole campaigns or ad sets, for example two audiences. For ads, use creative testing.

Two traps:

- One ad set per ad, which you turn on and off yourself. Meta itself says that when you have too many ad sets, it learns less about each one. Meta also says tests done by turning ad sets on and off by hand are unreliable.
- All the ads in one ad set, without the testing tool. There, Meta splits the money itself and often gives more to the ad that looks like it's working in the first few days. The others get too little for you to judge them.

An ad that spent less than its test budget didn't lose. It just didn't get tested.

What you don't touch until the decision date

The next day you look, the cost is high, and you swap the image. Without realizing it, you've asked Facebook to learn everything from scratch.

A new ad set goes through a learning phase: the stretch when Meta is still learning who to show the ad to. It usually gets out of it after about 50 results in the week after the last significant edit. Here's what Meta counts as a significant edit:

- pausing the ad set for 7 days or longer;
- changing the step it counts as a result, for example from add to cart to purchase (Meta calls this an "event");
- changing the audience;
- adding or changing ads;
- changing the bid strategy;
- changing the budget, depending on how big the change is.

Each one starts the learning over. So set the budget before you start, and don't touch the ad set until the decision date.

When the result doesn't show up in your ad account

At a repair shop, a clinic, or an inn, customers call or text, and your ad account never finds out. To know which ad each one came from, do this:

1. Send each ad to its own page: yoursite.com/r1, yoursite.com/r2, and so on. The pages can be identical. What changes is the "Text us" button on each one, which opens a text to you with a code already typed in: "Hi, I'd like to book a service (R1)," then "(R2)," and so on.
2. Build the button's link. Put in your number with +1 in front, then the message, encoded for a link. For the message with R1, with your number in place of the X's, the link looks like this (test it on an iPhone and an Android phone before the ad goes live):

COPY THIS

```
sms:+1XXXXXXXXXX?&body=Hi%2C%20I%27d%20like%20to%20book%20a%20service%20%28R1%29
```

3. When the text comes in, write the code down in your appointment log.
4. On the phone, ask "How did you hear about us?" and, if they say Facebook, "What did you see in the ad?" Write the answer in the same log.

If most of your customers call instead of texting, the cleaner way is a separate tracking phone number for each ad, which call-tracking services rent by the month. Each number forwards to your real line and counts the calls.

How to read the numbers

Watch three numbers, in this order:

1. Thumb-stop rate: how many people stop to look. For video, 3-second views divided by impressions. It tells you whether the opening works.

2. Link CTR: out of 100 impressions, how many end in a click on the link. It tells you whether the angle and the offer interest people.
3. Cost per result: what an order, an appointment, or a quote request costs you. This is the one that decides.

Image ads don't have 3-second views, so skip the thumb-stop rate there and start with CTR.

Meta counts a 3-second view each time the video plays for at least three seconds, or nearly all the way through if it's shorter. It counts them per impression and without replays. Ads Manager doesn't give you the percentage ready-made. Add the 3-second video plays and impressions columns to your report and do the division yourself, or in Table 12.

There's no right number for thumb-stop rate or CTR that holds for everyone, so compare them across your own ads, in the same account and the same time period. The fixed numbers are your target cost and break-even from Table 1.

Diagnosis: what the numbers say and what you change.

THUMB-STOP RATE	LINK CTR	COST PER RESULT	WHAT IT MEANS	WHAT YOU CHANGE
low compared with the others	any	any	the first shot and the first line don't stop anyone	a new opening on the same angle
good	low	above target cost	people looked, but the angle or the offer doesn't interest them	a different angle or a clearer offer
good	good	above target cost	people reach the page and stop there	the page (see the list below)
good	good	below target cost	the ad works	keep it and make new openings on its angle
good	good	below target cost, but rising two weeks in a row	the ad is wearing out	get new ads ready on the same angle (Step 8)
any	any	below target cost, but few end up buying (for appointments, bookings, and requests)	the angle brings in the wrong people	put the price, the area, or the minimum order in the ad

When the problem is the page, check three things:

- [ ] the price on the page matches the ad;
- [ ] the page loads fast on a phone;
- [ ] the button shows without scrolling.

Your worksheet

Table 11. The test plan.

ROUND	WHAT YOU TEST	VERSIONS (A TO F)	BUDGET PER AD	DECISION DATE	WINNER
1	3 angles × 2 openings	A: · B: · C: · D: · E: · F:			
2	4 new openings on the winning angle	A: · B: · C: · D:			
3	the format or the offer	A: · B:			

Table 12. The results.

AD	SPENT	IMPRESSIONS	THUMB-STOP, %	LINK CTR	RESULTS	COST PER RESULT	KEEP OR STOP

The formulas, if you keep the table in a spreadsheet:

- thumb-stop rate, in % = 3-second views ÷ impressions × 100;
- link CTR, in % = link clicks ÷ impressions × 100;
- cost per result = amount spent ÷ number of results.

When to stop an ad in the test:

- it has spent twice the target cost with no result;
- it has spent its test budget, and the cost per result is above break-even.

A test budget only catches big differences, because it gets you two or three results per ad, and one order more or less moves the cost a lot. If an ad is above target cost but below break-even, the result is unclear: let it collect more results or change its opening, depending on the diagnosis. Thumb-stop rate and CTR are counted over thousands of impressions, so you can trust them sooner than cost per result.

09 STEP 8. NEW ADS EVERY WEEK

"This ad again?" Has anyone left that comment under an ad you've been running for three months?

The same ad, seen by the same people, wears out. That's why you get a few new ads ready every week, even when things are going well. That way you have something to swap in on the day the signs of fatigue show up. You'll find them below.

On Meta (Facebook and Instagram), upload new ads only in the two cases under "Where to put new ads." TikTok says to refresh your creatives when results keep dropping or when the ad reaches fewer and fewer new people each day.

Five color versions of the same photo are most likely one ad. A new angle, a new opening, or a different format is a new ad.

How many new ads, and how different

- TikTok suggests 3 to 5 different creatives per ad group.
- Meta recommends that advertisers vary their creative, test, and let the system optimize (a Meta spokesperson, quoted by Marketing Brew on September 28, 2026).
- One agency quoted in the same article says Meta treats the same person on camera with different text on top as the same creative.

A working rule: 3 to 5 new openings a week on the angle that's working, and one new angle a month. If you get fewer than ten results a month, stick to the rule from Step 7: each month, run the angle that's working next to a new one.

Where to put new ads

This is where the platforms behave differently:

- On TikTok, add the new creatives to the ad group that's already running. That extends its life, as TikTok recommends.
- On Meta, adding or changing the ads in an ad set is a significant edit and restarts the learning phase. So keep new ads ready and upload them to the ad set that's working in only two cases. First: Ads Manager shows "Creative limited" or "Creative fatigue" on your current ads. Second: your cost per result goes above your target cost. Leave the old ad running next to the new one and stop it only if it goes above break-even.

Your worksheet

Table 13. The weekly routine.

DAY	WHAT YOU DO	WHO
Monday	look at last week's numbers, the fatigue signs, and the stop rule from Step 7	
Tuesday	read the new comments and messages and add lines to Table 2	
Wednesday	write 3 to 5 new openings on the winning angle	
Thursday	shoot or make the creatives, on your phone	
Friday	set them aside, ready to upload to Meta in the two cases from "Where to put new ads"	

Signs an ad is wearing out

Look for them on Mondays:

THE SIGN	WHERE YOU SEE IT
cost per result rises two weeks in a row without you changing anything	Table 12, week by week
Meta shows "Creative limited" (cost went up, but less than double) or "Creative fatigue" (cost doubled)	the delivery column in Ads Manager, next to the ad
thumb-stop rate drops, even though the ad is the same	the 3-second video plays column
frequency goes up while results go down	the frequency column in Ads Manager
comments like "this ad again?" show up	under the ad

Frequency tells you how many times, on average, each person has seen the ad: impressions divided by the number of people who saw it. Rising frequency together with falling results usually means fatigue.

10 FOUR WORKED EXAMPLES, FROM THE CUSTOMER'S WORDS TO THE DECISION

The businesses below are **examples**, made up so you can see the workbook filled in. The numbers are hypothetical and picked to show the math, not as a benchmark for your market. Put your own in their place.

Example A. Online store selling sofa beds

Target cost. The average order is $1,200 before sales tax, and the gross margin is 35%, so $420 per order. Out of that, the store pays for white-glove delivery (they carry it upstairs), $90, which leaves $330 per order.

- Break-even: 330 × 10 ÷ 10 = $330 per order. The store counts 10 orders kept out of 10, because in the last year nobody canceled a sofa bed at delivery and nobody sent one back.
- The owner wants to keep at least $150 per order. Target cost: 330 − 150 = **$180 per order**.
- Test budget for one ad: 180 × 2 to 3 = $360 to $540.

The customers' words, from messages and from competitors' reviews: "does the foam sag after a year?" "will it fit in my studio?" "who's carrying it up four flights with no elevator?"

What people already know. The ads run on Facebook and Instagram, where people aren't searching for anything, so you mostly reach levels 1 and 2. A sofa bed is the exception: nobody buys one on impulse. Anyone who stops at the ad already has the need (guests coming, a studio apartment, an old sofa that's given out) and is comparing stores. They know the fix, not you: level 3. That's why the openings lead with what this store has and others don't: carrying it upstairs is included, and the foam is denser.

The three angles:

WHO IT'S FOR	THEIR SITUATION, IN THEIR WORDS	WHAT THEY GET	THE PROOF
people in a studio apartment	"I don't have room for a bed and a couch"	a sofa, a bed, and storage	the video of the sofa turning into a bed in a studio
people who got burned by a cheap sofa	"does the foam sag after a year?"	denser foam	the sofa sawed in half, on camera
people in a walk-up with no elevator	"who's carrying it up four flights?"	delivery and carrying it upstairs included in the price	the all-in price on the product page, and a sample invoice

The openings picked, from the list in Step 3, for the online store:

- for the studio, openings 10 and 2;
- for the foam, 5 and a new one: "Did your sofa sag after a year? Our foam is denser.";
- for the walk-up, opening 4 and a new one: "Fourth floor, no elevator? We carry it up for free."

The format: Reels 9:16, then cropped to 4:5 for the feed.

The budget. Six ads × $360 to $540 = $2,160 to $3,240, but the store only has $1,800 a month for testing. So it runs round 1 with three ads, one opening per angle: 10 for the studio, 5 for the foam, and 4 for the walk-up, with $540 on each. The other openings wait for round 2.

The results, after each ad spent $540 (made-up numbers):

AD	THUMB-STOP	LINK CTR	ORDERS	COST PER ORDER	DECISION
the studio	27%	1.2%	3	$180	keep it: right at target cost
the sawed-in-half foam	34%	0.5%	1	$540	stop it: good opening, weak angle
the walk-up	15%	1.4%	2	$270	stop it, keep the angle: weak opening

What the owner does next:

- Keeps the studio ad. Round 2 means four new openings on the studio angle.
- Stops the foam ad, because at $540 it's past the $330 break-even and loses money on every order.
- The walk-up ad spent $540 and brought in 2 orders, $270 per order. That's between the target cost ($180) and break-even ($330), so it still leaves a profit, but two orders don't say much. The 15% thumb-stop rate, counted over thousands of impressions, shows clearly that the opening is weak. The owner stops the ad and keeps the angle. Round 2 is for the studio, the winning angle, and the walk-up comes back separately after it, with a new opening: the first shot shows the building's stairwell.
- The foam ad stops people but doesn't send them to the site. The image of the sawed-in-half foam works, so the owner makes a version of the studio video with the foam as the second scene and keeps it ready for the two cases from Step 8.

Example B. Auto repair shop with appointments

Target cost. This is the shop from Step 1. The basic oil change with a filter is $89, same as in the ad, but with the parts found during the visit, a visit brings in $450 on average before sales tax. The margin on parts and labor is 40%, so $180, and the calendar shows that out of 10 people who book, 8 show up.

- Break-even: 180 × 8 ÷ 10 = $144 per appointment.
- The owner wants to keep at least $50 from each visit. Target cost: (180 − 50) × 8 ÷ 10 = **$104 per appointment**.

- Test budget for one ad: 104 × 2 to 3, so about $210 to $310.

The owner knows plenty of customers come back for their next service, but doesn't have the exact number, so for now the math is on the first visit only.

The customers' words: "I'm worried they'll replace stuff that doesn't need replacing," "what's it going to cost me in the end?" and "I can't sit at a shop all day."

What people already know. Someone who searches Google for "auto repair" plus the city knows the fix and is comparing: level 3. Someone who sees the ad on Facebook only has the problem, sometimes not even that: a warning light, a noise.

Which platforms:

- Google Search, for people who are searching, with the headlines from the table in Step 3;
- Meta, within a few miles of the shop, for people who only have the problem.

The three angles:

- the check engine light: the dashboard scene, in the morning;
- the fear of getting ripped off: old parts handed back and photos of what was replaced;
- time: drop it at 8, pick it up at 5, booked from your phone.

How the shop measures. Appointments come in by phone and by text, so the ad account doesn't see them. The shop has $750 for the first round, so round 1 has three ads at $250 each, one per angle, and each sends people to its own page with a "Text us" button and a code, R1 to R3. On the phone, the service advisor asks "What did you see in the ad?" and logs the ad based on the answer: the light, the parts, or the time. On Fridays, the service advisor counts appointments for each code.

The results, after $250 per ad (made-up numbers):

AD	APPOINTMENTS	COST PER APPOINTMENT	DECISION
the check engine light	4	$62.50	stays, it's below the $104 target cost
the old parts	2	$125	unclear: above target cost, below the $144 break-even, with only two appointments; it gets another $125, on top of the $750
time	1	$250	out of the Meta test, it's above the $144 break-even

What the owner does next:

- Keeps the check engine light ad.
- The old parts ad gets another $125 to collect results. The owner makes a version of the check engine light video now, with the old parts as proof ("and we give you your old parts back"), and only uploads it in the two cases from Step 8.
- The time angle gets tested on Google, in the ad headlines, because that's where people compare shops and booking online really matters.

Example C. A 6-room inn in the Catskills, with direct bookings

Target cost. What does the owner keep from a $380 weekend? A night for two brings in $190 before tax, and the average stay is two nights. With lodging you don't buy goods to resell, so the gross margin in Table 1 is basically all of the revenue. You subtract only what each stay costs you: cleaning, breakfast, and supplies, $90. That leaves $290. Out of 10 bookings, one cancels, so 9 out of 10 become a stay. The owner wants to keep at least $140 from each stay.

- Break-even: 290 × 9 ÷ 10 = $261 per booking.
- Target cost: (290 − 140) × 9 ÷ 10 = $135. The owner rounds it down to $130 per booking, to leave some margin.

The comparison with the booking sites. Some rooms already get booked through Booking.com or Expedia, which take a commission. How much? The owner looks it up on the site's invoice for a $380 booking instead of going by what other people say. We don't give the number; everyone has it on their own invoice. Then, for every booking that came from an ad, the owner checks the reservation system to see whether the guest has stayed before. Or asks directly: "Have you stayed with us before?" If they have, and they booked through the site last time, they're a guest the inn would probably have gotten through the site anyway. Then the owner compares the cost of the booking from the ad with the commission. If it's lower, the ad is worth it, even if it doesn't fill extra rooms. If the guest is new, the owner compares the cost with the $130. It's a rough test, but one the owner can check.

The customers' words: "is it quiet at night?" "can we bring the dog?" "is the road paved all the way up?"

What people already know. On Facebook and Instagram, people aren't looking for a place to stay. Most of the time they weren't even thinking about a weekend in the mountains. They're at levels 1 and 2 from Step 2, where the ad opens with the scene. That's why the inn's ads show the place first: the porch at 7 am, the road filmed from the car, the play corner. Only then do they answer the question that would stop someone.

Which platform. The ads run on Meta, meaning Facebook and Instagram, as vertical videos.

The three angles:

- the quiet: the video shot from the porch at 7 am, with the real sound;
- families with small kids: the play corner, seen from the table;
- the road: filmed from the car, from the highway to the door, so nobody has to ask again.

The budget and the earlier step. Say it's an off-season month. To judge an ad by bookings, the owner would need 130 × 2 to 3 = $260 to $390 per ad. This month the owner can't afford six ads judged by bookings, or even three, since three would cost $780 to $1,170. So the owner still tests three ads, but doesn't judge them by bookings anymore. They get judged by availability requests sent by text, as Step 7 says under "If the budget isn't enough." From the reservation system, the owner knows that 4 out of 10 requests become a booking.

- Target cost per request: 130 × 4 ÷ 10 = $52.
- An ad can be judged after $104 to $156 spent.

- Three ads cost $312 to $468 (3 × 104 = 312, 3 × 156 = 468).

The results (made up). The road video brings in the most requests, at $30 each. The quiet brings in fewer, at $48 each, but almost all of them turn into bookings. The owner keeps both. The families ad spent $104 with no requests, which is twice the target cost per request, so it's out of the test. In the end, what counts is cost per booking. The owner checks that at the end of the month, in the reservation system.

Example D. A company that builds steel buildings for other businesses

Target cost. An average contract is $600,000, with a 10% margin, so $60,000. Out of 10 requests, 5 get a quote and one gets signed, so 1 out of 10 requests becomes a contract.

- Break-even per request: 60,000 × 1 ÷ 10 = $6,000.
- The owner wants to keep at least $48,000 of the margin on a contract, so that leaves 60,000 − 48,000 = $12,000 per contract for ads, which is 20% of the margin.
- Target cost per request: (60,000 − 48,000) × 1 ÷ 10 = **$1,200**.

With the rule from Step 7, an ad would have to spend $2,400 to $3,600 before you could judge it, and a request only turns into a contract after months of talks. The usual test doesn't work here, so the company does it differently:

1. It tests only angles, three at a time, for three months. It changes openings only once an angle has brought in qualified requests.
2. It judges by qualified requests, not by every form sent. Each request goes through the checklist below.
3. It keeps ads that show how the work gets done running all year. The LinkedIn B2B Institute, together with the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute, published what they call the 95-5 rule in 2021: in any given quarter, out of 100 businesses that could buy from you, about 5 are ready to buy now and about 95 aren't. The rest buy later. The video of a building going up and the one about what the inspector checks don't bring in requests this week, but they make the company known by the time someone actually needs a building.

Checklist for a qualified request. Tick what's true. Three ticks out of five means a qualified request.

- ☐ They own the land or know where they're building.
- ☐ The size fits the buildings you usually put up.
- ☐ They want to start within the next 12 months.
- ☐ The person who wrote in makes the decision or brings in the person who does.
- ☐ The budget they have in mind fits your prices.

Target cost per qualified request. From last year's log, the company knows that 6 out of 10 requests were qualified, and the contract came from the qualified ones, so one contract comes from 6 qualified requests. Target cost per qualified request is 12,000 ÷ 6 = **$2,000**, and that's the number it judges ads by.

Which platforms:

- LinkedIn, by job title (owner, operations director, plant manager) and by its customers' industries;
- Google Search, on searches like "steel building price" or "commercial steel building contractor";
- Meta, only for owners of small businesses in the area, with the videos that show how the work gets done.

The angles:

- the completion date in the contract, with penalties. It answers "who's on the hook if it runs late?";
- the quote by phase, in a few days. It answers "is the price per square foot everything?";
- design-build: one contract, from drawings to final inspection.

What the test showed (made-up numbers). The completion-date angle spent $4,000 over three months and brought in 6 requests, 4 of them qualified: $1,000 per qualified request, half the target cost. The other two angles brought in plenty of requests, but mostly from people with no land. The company keeps the completion-date angle and stops the one-contract angle. It moves the phased pricing to the quote page, where it helps in the second conversation, not the first.

11 MISTAKES THAT RUIN A TEST

Each mistake has three parts here: what you see, where it comes from, and how you fix it.

- One ad takes almost the whole budget, the others almost nothing. The ads are too similar, and the platform picks one in the first few days. Make ads with different angles or formats. Test the ones that didn't spend their test budget separately; they're not lost.
- Results jump around from day to day and you can't decide anything. You stopped or changed ads after a day or two. Set the decision date before you start and don't touch the ad set until then.
- You don't know what worked, even though you have a winning ad. You changed the opening, the offer, and the format in the same round. Change one thing per round.
- The ad set that was doing well went off the rails after you added new ads. On Meta, adding ads to an ad set restarts the learning phase. Upload new ads only when Meta shows "Creative limited" or "Creative fatigue," or when cost goes above your target cost, not every week.
- Lots of clicks, almost nobody buys. The ad promises something the page doesn't show right away: a different price, a different photo, a different product. The first screen of the page repeats the exact offer and image from the ad.
- The ad gets rejected over the price. The price in the ad doesn't match the page, or shipping costs are missing. Write the total price, the same everywhere, and check the page before you upload the ad.

- The text on the video doesn't show on Reels. You put it where the buttons and caption cover it. Keep text out of the top 14%, the bottom 35%, and 6% on each side.
- You pick the winner by likes and comments. People who never buy comment too. Decide by cost per result, compared with the target cost from Table 1.
- Every ad looks "bad." You're comparing them with numbers from an article, from another market and another product. Compare only your own ads, in the same account.
- Lots of results, few customers. The angle draws people who aren't a fit: from another city, with another budget. Put the price, the area, or the minimum order in the ad.
- Ad rejected on Meta for "personal attributes." The copy asks "are you bankrupt?" or "do you have diabetes?" or "are you divorced?" Talk about the service, not the person: "Bankruptcy help."

12 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much budget do I need to test?
What two or three results cost you at your target cost, for each ad. If your target cost is $70 per appointment, one ad gets $140 to $210, and six ads get $840 to $1,260. If you don't have that, test three ads or judge by an earlier step, as Step 7 explains.

Do I need video, or do images work too?
Images work too, especially in the feed and in Google's image ads (Demand Gen). Video helps when the product does something you can see: a sofa unfolding, a building going up, an inn room filmed in the morning. It also helps when people want to see who'll be serving them. TikTok and Reels are built for video, so there you'll struggle without it.

Can I write my ads with AI?
You can have it make variations, count characters, or rewrite an opening five ways. But the lines you start from have to be your customers', from Table 2. Copy written from scratch by AI sounds like everyone else doing the same thing, and in a feed full of similar ads, that's exactly what makes you invisible.

How many new ads do I need each week?
TikTok suggests 3 to 5 different creatives per ad group. Meta recommends varied creative but doesn't give a fixed number. A working rule: 3 to 5 new openings a week on the angle that's working, and one new angle a month. With fewer than ten results a month, run the angle that's working next to a new one each month.

Can I copy the ad that's working for a competitor?
No, and it wouldn't help you anyway: the same people have already seen it from them. You look at their ads to know which angles are taken and what nobody's saying. The open angle is yours.

I don't have reviews, the business is new. What do I use as proof?
The demo and your process: the product on camera doing what you promise, your people at work, a written guarantee. Don't buy reviews and don't write them yourself. After the first sales, ask for them with the message from Step 6, "How to ask for a review."

How long does a good ad last?
Until the fatigue signs from Step 8 show up: cost rises two weeks in a row, thumb-stop rate drops, frequency climbs, or Meta shows "Creative fatigue." Some last weeks, others months, but don't swap one out just because you're sick of it: you've seen it a hundred times, your customer has seen it a few.

Do I use the same creative on Meta, TikTok, and Google?
The same idea, yes. The creative you adapt: shoot it vertical, crop it to 4:5 and 1:1, and rewrite the copy to each platform's lengths. On Reels you have 44 characters of primary text, on Google Search 30 characters per headline.

Do businesses that sell to other businesses belong on Facebook?
If the owner of a small business makes the decision, yes, because they're on Facebook like everyone else. If the decision maker is a director at a big company, you'll find them more reliably on LinkedIn, where you pick people by job title. And on Google, when they search.

13 YOUR PLAN FOR THE NEXT FOUR WEEKS

Week 1: target cost and angles

- [ ] Fill in Table 1.
- [ ] Make the three phone calls.
- [ ] Search the ad libraries.
- [ ] Fill in Tables 2 to 5 and Table 10, with the proof you have.

Done when you have your target cost and three angles, each with its proof.

Week 2: the ads

- [ ] Write the openings (Table 6) and the video outlines (Table 7).
- [ ] Pick the formats (Table 8) and write the offer (Table 9).
- [ ] Get permission for the reviews.
- [ ] Shoot the creatives.

Done when you have the round 1 ads ready to upload, six, or three if the budget doesn't stretch, with the copy counted for characters.

Week 3: round 1

- [ ] Do the trial run: an order, an appointment, or a request shows up in the account.
- [ ] Launch round 1, with the budget and decision date written in Table 11.
- [ ] Don't touch the ad set until the decision date.
- [ ] Each day, count only results, not likes.

Done when every ad has spent its test budget.

Week 4: the decision and the routine

- [ ] Fill in Table 12 and run the numbers through the diagnosis.
- [ ] Pick the winning ad.
- [ ] Write four new openings for round 2.
- [ ] Put a person on each day in Table 13.

Done when round 2 is running and the Monday-to-Friday routine has a person on every day.

After week four, follow the routine in Table 13. Once a month, redo Table 1, because your gross margin, prices, and shipping costs change, and your break-even and target cost change with them.

14 APPENDIX. SIZES AND TEXT LENGTHS, BY PLATFORM

Platforms change these numbers often. Check them in your ad account or on the official pages under Sources before you upload.

WHERE	FORMAT	RECOMMENDED SIZE, IN PIXELS	TEXT, IN CHARACTERS
Meta, Facebook feed	4:5, image or video	1440 × 1800	primary text 50 to 150, headline 27
Meta, Reels and Stories	9:16	1440 × 2560	primary text on Reels: 44
Google Search	text only		15 headlines of 30, 4 descriptions of 90
Google Demand Gen, image	1.91:1, 1:1, 4:5, 9:16	1200 × 628, 1200 × 1200, 960 × 1200, 1080 × 1920	headline 40, description 90, business name 25
Google Demand Gen and YouTube, video	16:9, 9:16, 1:1, 4:5	1920 × 1080, 1080 × 1920, 1080 × 1080, 1080 × 1350	
LinkedIn, image	1:1, 1.91:1, 4:5	1200 × 1200, 1200 × 628, 720 × 900	intro text 150, headline 70
TikTok	9:16	1080 × 1920 (540 × 960 at least)	description under 100, display name 20

What else to know, platform by platform:

- Meta, Facebook feed: images are JPG or PNG, up to 30 MB. Videos are MP4 or MOV.
- Meta, Reels and Stories: keep text and logos out of the top 14% of the screen, the bottom 35%, and 6% on each side. That's where the buttons and caption go, and they cover your text.
- Google Search: add at least 3 headlines and 2 descriptions. You also get two display path fields of 15 characters each, for example yoursite.com/service/price.
- Google Demand Gen: these are Google's image and video ads, which show on YouTube (Shorts included), Discover, Gmail, and the Google Display Network. Add 3 images for each orientation and a square logo. Videos are at least 5 seconds. Under 10 seconds, they won't run before YouTube videos.
- LinkedIn, for businesses that sell to other businesses: images are JPG, PNG, or GIF, up to 5 MB. For mobile, LinkedIn recommends 4:5. Keep intro text to 150 characters and headlines to 70 (LinkedIn's spec).
- TikTok: videos can run up to 10 minutes and 500 MB. For reservation ads, TikTok recommends 9- to 15-second videos and descriptions under 100 characters, so they don't get cut off.

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